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Latin America in the Post-national World

The present situation of Latin America has to be explained in terms of the interaction between two main sets of factors. On the one hand there are the long-term cultural, political and economic processes which underlie its development since the early 16th century. On the other hand, there are the more conjunctural processes and results of events happening in the shorter term: namely, globalization, the prevalence of neoliberal policies since 1980 and the recent economic downturn which started in 2000 and which is just beginning to recede. In this paper I would like to consider both aspects. I shall start by briefly considering some characteristics of Latin America's long-term road to modernity.

1. Some features of the Latin American path to modernity

For a start, four main cultural features, formed during three centuries of colonial rule, can be said to condition the character of the Latin American path to modernity. First, a catholic religious monopoly which was never seriously challenged by the main protestant denominations or by religious dissidence of popular origin. Second, political centralism which never had to compete with local (feudal) powers and third, a tendency to authoritarianism in politics which has survived even within formal democracy. Finally, an economic preference for exporting raw materials and primary products which fails to result in strong and independent industrial bourgeoisies and proletariats. All these elements point to a strong Latin American centralist cultural tradition (Véliz 1984: 15-16).

The centralist and authoritarian features and the absence of a strong bourgeoisie give a special character both to the first experiments with democracy and to the economic orientation in Latin America. The construction of democracy had initially an imitative character: most constitutional projects very closely copied European or North American models. The majority of these projects were not suc-

cessful and had an ephemeral character: they did not survive for a long time. In addition, they managed to achieve very reduced popular participation. In so far as the economy is concerned, contrary to the European road to modernity, industrialization was postponed and replaced by a raw material exporting system which retained the backwardness of the productive sectors, especially under the hacienda system.

It was only during the first half of the 20th century, when due to the export crisis the oligarchic governments came to an end, that the state played a central role in two substantial advances of modernity. First, the expansion of democracy by the widening of the franchise which allowed the middle and working classes to participate in the political system from which they had been excluded so far. Second, the beginning of import-substituting industrialization, which promoted a new kind of inward-oriented economic development.

However, the widening of democracy with the incorporation of the middle classes in political power and the implementation of social legislation, was not exempted from contradictions of an authoritarian character. During the three years that followed the Great Depression of 1929, seventeen governments were overthrown by force in twelve Latin American countries (Véliz 1984: 273). In several cases, it was military interventions that gave rise to populist and nationalist regimes which widened political participation and established forms of welfare state and social legislation from above and against the conservative forces entrenched in parliaments. These regimes sought the support of the masses by organizing them. Peron in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil helped create trade unions from within the state.

Thus between 1930 and 1970 a process of modernization was consolidated in Latin America which widened democracy and the process of industrialization began to make progress. The latter was realized with heavy state protection and investment, which continued practically until the end of the 1970s. At the same time, the populist coalitions that carried out these reforms also established incipient forms of social legislation and welfare state. Therefore, it could be argued that the general orientation of the modernizing process in Latin America at this time had more affinity with the European road to modernity than with the North American one.

In spite of this clear-cut influence of European modernity, there are important differences that remain between the European path and the Latin American one. Conditioned by cultural traits formed during three centuries of colonial rule, Latin American modernity tends to have a centralized character while European modernity is inclined to have more decentralized features. This affects both democracy and the economy. The European parliamentary system generally distributes power more evenly, while the Latin American presidential system tends to concentrate power. In Latin America “presidentialism” is an important source of serious conflicts between the executive and legislative powers; such conflicts are not necessarily as acute in the European parliamentary regimes. This factor has contributed in an important manner to the political instability of Latin America because the executive as much as the legislative branches of the state claim popular legitimacy and tend to blame each other for their problems (Hartlyn/Valenzuela 1997: 23). An example of this is the recent parliamentary attempt to impeach President Lucio Gutiérrez of Ecuador.

On the economic front, the British industrial bourgeoisie was born far away from the state centres of power in small provincial workshops, whereas the Latin American industrial bourgeoisie was created by state action and has always been much more dependent on state aid in order to exist and prosper. The key role of the state in the birth of entrepreneurial classes has led them to interfere much more actively in politics in order to achieve favourable conditions in their own interests, which is also destabilizing and potentially increases the possibilities of corruption.

A second important difference between the European trajectory and the Latin American one has to do with the practical efficacy of citizens’ rights. While in Europe there is a greater correspondence between citizens’ rights and their respect in practice, in Latin America declared rights enacted in constitutions and laws often lack guarantees and accessible procedures that protect them in practice. According to Whitehead “the majority of subjects experience the insecure and unpredictable character of their rights” (Whitehead 1997: 69) and often are defenceless in the face of the enormous power of the state and enterprises. This is related to what O’Donnell has called “a democracy of low intensity citizenship” which occurs when the state is unable to enforce its legality, not so much in the area of political rights, as in the

area of civil rights: “peasants, slum-dwellers, Indians, women, et al., are often unable to get fair treatment in the courts, or to obtain from state agencies services to which they are entitled, or to be safe from police violence ... etc.” (O’Donnell 1993: 16).

The difference between Europe and Latin America can be understood further by means of a distinction between the polycentric structure of European modernity and the concentric structure of the Latin American modernity (Mascareño 2000; Leiva 2003). A polycentric society would be that in which its diverse component systems such as politics, law, economy, religion, science and art are highly autonomous and able to organize themselves without interference from others, thus excluding the possibility that one of them controls the others and becomes the centre of society. On the contrary, in Latin American concentric society, although there is functional differentiation, the political system instrumentalizes the other systems by imposing upon them its own logic and interests (Mascareño 2004: 68-69 and footnote 15). The autonomy of politics is realized at the cost of the other spheres’ own autonomy.

This is the reason why Brunner has argued that in contrast to the modernity of central countries, Latin American modernity suffers from a

voracity of politics which swallows everything and behind which everyone seeks protection or justification: equally entrepreneurs, intellectuals, universities, trade unions, social organisations, clerics, the armed forces (Brunner 1988: 33).

The enormous gravitation of politics and the state also reaches art, culture and education. The consequence of this tendency, widely recognized by many authors, is that, in general, civil society in Latin America (the sphere of individuals, classes and non-governmental organizations) is weak, insufficiently developed and very dependent upon the state.

By 1973 a new phase set in which ended the stage of protected and centralized modernization. At this time in Latin America the processes of industrialisation and development entirely lost their dynamism, economic growth came to a standstill and even became negative during the 80s, and as a consequence social and labour agitation became widespread. The international recession resulted in unemployment, inflation and increased political instability everywhere. Under the

threat of increasingly radicalized left-wing urban movements, a new wave of military coups set in all over Latin America. This time round right-wing dictatorships are established, not only more durable than those of the 1930s in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, etc., but also with longer-term social and economic impacts associated with the application of new economic policies of liberal character.

2. The Impact of the new Neoliberal Stage

The novelty of the situation, which came to confirm old cultural trends, is that the renewed liberal character of economic policies can coexist with authoritarianism in politics. This has three important effects on the modernizing processes: on the one side the reaffirmation of the authoritarian centralist tendency in conflict with the rule of law. Second, the relative depoliticization of society and, third, the beginning of a change from the relative influence of the European social democratic model of welfare state to the preeminence of the North American model of individual liberty.

In the first place, the authoritarian centralist tendency was confirmed by the new wave of dictatorships. This is just the last instalment in a long history in which the breakdowns of democracy and the recurrent presence of dictatorships figure prominently. True, from the first years of widespread anarchy (1810-1850) to the 20th century, there has been much improvement. Yet one would be mistaken in believing that the 20th century represents a dramatic shift from the old pattern. During this time there were 3 periods in which many Latin American governments were overthrown by force: 1930-1933, 1948-1954 and 1964-1980.

Some authors have contrasted European stability, where there is a closer correspondence and articulation between the political system and the legal system (Mascareño 2004: 65), with the Latin American instability, where power and legality are frequently decoupled. In the first case there is a form of articulation between the two systems which mutually respect the autonomy of each other in their own sphere. This means that “the function of politics – to take binding collective decisions – is not ... directly realized through power, but processed by means of legality and only then transformed into law”

(Mascareño 2004: 73). It also means that political power provides external support so that legality could be enforced within other systems, beyond the legal system itself (Mascareño 2004: 65).

That this does not always happen in Latin America can be explained by the concentric structure of its modernity, whereby politics has acquired primacy over other spheres and often does without legality, or, more frequently, accommodates legality to its own interests and prevents it from fulfilling its role in other spheres. Given the character of Latin American culture, the *de facto* surpassing of legality is almost always accompanied by a strong nominal legalism which seeks juridical justifications. But all the same, the coupling of power and legality has been always weaker in Latin America, given the cultural centrality of power and authority. The European polycentric structure, on the contrary, seems to guarantee that politics, even though also playing a central role, respects the autonomy of legality and avoids flouting it.

The second effect of the changes occurring since 1970 in Latin America is the relative depoliticization of society (at least in the traditional sense of institutionalized democratic politics). There has been a change from a positive evaluation of politicians, parties and ideologies as essential elements for leading a nation in the years prior to the 1970s, to the present extremely negative evaluation and generalized disillusion with them. The depoliticization of Chileans, for example, can be detected throughout the 1990s by most surveys, which consistently show a decrease in the identification of people with political parties, a growing lack of interest in political affairs and a negative evaluation of politicians. The loss of prestige of politicians and the disaffection with politics in general has also become acute in Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Argentina.

The origins of this are clearly related to two factors. First, the failure of politics to deliver the kind of economic development which could redistribute wealth and thus bringing down widespread poverty. Second, the political repression taking place during military dictatorships. Military dictatorships sought to depoliticize society by eliminating elections, abolishing political parties and closing down parliaments. However, after a few years of forced depoliticization by terror, the very policies of exclusion and violation of human rights, led to the opposite result in the long-term: society became more intensely politi-

cized against military governments. This led to a search for crucial agreements and strong coalitions among the opposition forces in order to negotiate the end of military rule, thus allowing the return to democracy. Paradoxically, it was the negotiated conditions for the transition to democracy that had to do with depoliticization (Silva 2004: 159-160). This in three different ways.

First, democratic coalition forces exercised a strong restraining influence on popular mobilization so as not to give the military a motive to return. In almost every country of the region trade unions were partially dismantled and those which survived experienced a severe loss of influence and power. Politicians of the centre-left frequently resorted to self-censorship and did not want to support any movement which could cause political upheaval among the armed forces or entrepreneurial sectors.

Second, part of the negotiated deals to return to democracy included, even if sometimes only implicitly, total respect for the self-regulating nature of the economic sphere in order to protect it from the ups and downs of everyday political discussion. The price of democratization was the increased autonomy of and the loss of state control over the economy. Politics became more self-referential and people lost interest in it.

A part of this process was the new attitude of social scientists, many of them persecuted and exiled. The years of bloody dictatorships in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia, not to speak of the more or less permanent situation of repression in Central America, changed their perception of politics. Their focus of analysis radically shifted, from strategies for social change and development to problems of the political system, democracy and human rights. Important as these problems are, the exclusive re-focussing on them by default left the management of the economy to the new neo-liberal forces (Lechner 1991). This abdication of responsibility also had depoliticising effects.

Third, when democracy returned, the newly elected governments did not satisfy people's expectations that those responsible for the human rights abuses would be brought to justice. Which again produced deep disillusionment and political demobilization. Human rights groups experienced great difficulties in getting support from politicians. Democratic governments accepted or even enacted am-

nesty laws which exempted the military from any responsibility. In Chile, for instance, many deputies from the governing coalition (Concertación) voted against the political condemnation of Pinochet when he took his seat in Senate. The Concertación's strategy to cause a minimum of problems with the armed forces prompted a marked policy to lower the profile of complaints by the surviving victims and families of the disappeared victims. It was only from the moment Pinochet was detained in London, ten years after the return to democracy, that Chilean tribunals started processing some criminal lawsuits which involved members of the armed forces and changed the interpretation of the amnesty law which exempted them from responsibility.

The newly acquired autonomy of the economic system in Latin America since the arrival of neoliberalism and its market-oriented economic policies, has nevertheless not meant that the economic system has replaced politics in the concentric pattern referred to above. The economic system continues to be frequently threatened not only by globalization, but also by political interventions, sometimes of a very arbitrary nature. It is true that the State is now weaker in terms of its capacity to implement progressive and redistributive social policies, but the executive power is stronger in terms of being able to take more or less arbitrary decisions (Boschi 2004: 290). Politics, through its privileged means, power, continues to be the central element which has been unable to fully subject itself to legality in Latin America, or rather it accommodates legality to its own interests. Thus President Meza of Bolivia or President Kirchner of Argentina or President Chavez of Venezuela frequently take decisions which interfere with the market and sometimes with international agreements. It cannot be maintained that the new autonomy of the economic system has displaced the preponderance of the presidential political system.

The third effect of changes occurring since 1970 in Latin America is the transition, very marked in some countries like Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Colombia and Chile, from a more interventionist social democratic European model of capitalism to a North American model of individual autonomy and diminished state intervention. It cannot be said that the welfare state existed everywhere in Latin America or that it was remotely as complete as the European model. Yet it had a relatively important influence. At any rate, the little welfare state that

could be found tended to be dismantled with the arrival of neoliberalism and the new model of individual citizenship drawn from the North American model. This has resulted in the privatization (and sometimes deterioration) of public education, health and social security and the sale of state public services and facilities. It has also meant the end of a series of interventionist economic policies, such as subsidies, price fixing, import and export controls, financial regulations of capital movements, differentiated and high custom tariffs, high state expenditure, etc. Within the new North American model trade unions and social organizations are weakened and, generally, a new kind of citizenship is brought about whereby citizens are basically conceived of as individual consumers of goods and services in the market.

Although up to a point the European social democratic regimes have also suffered the impact of the new neoliberal ideas and, under the pressure of having to curb excessive state expenditure, have been forced to cut their funding of the welfare state, public health and education, it is also true that even during the most radical right-wing governments of Mrs. Thatcher in Britain or Mr. Kohl in Germany the welfare state was not really dismantled to the extent it has been (the little that there was) in Latin America. Besides, economic policies in Europe have been coordinated, made uniform and regulated by the European Union for all the member states, which up to a point means a bigger degree of intervention in the economy. In Latin America, on the contrary, the tendency has been to deregulate, sell state assets, open frontiers and markets and enter into free trade agreements.

3. The Articulation between Politics and Economic Neoliberalism

From the mid-1980s onwards, a massive return to democracy has taken place in Latin America. What is important and different from other occasions is the renewed resilience of democracy which has allowed it to survive until now in most countries. Yet despite this newly acquired strength of democracy in the region, the picture of political instability has been growing worse since 2000 in Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, etc. The failed coup attempt against Chavez in Venezuela, the quick change of resigning presidents in Argentina (5 presidents in 2 weeks), the resignation of Fujimori in Peru and Sanchez de Losada in Bolivia, the very precari-

ous situation of Toledo in Peru, Gutiérrez in Ecuador and Meza in Bolivia, are symptoms of political systems in which legality continues to be frequently overstepped. In spite of this continuing political instability, dictatorships have not come back and this may have to do with the almost total disappearance of the revolutionary left and the discouragement of the United States (Silva 2004: 168).

The return to democracy was on the whole very rapid, Chile being the last country to come back to it in 1989. But it did not mean a change from the neoliberal economic policies started by the dictatorships. As Yocelévsky has put it, a factor shared by Latin American processes of democratization has been “the discrepancy between the democratic character of political change and the non-egalitarian, concentrating and excluding character of the development model upon whose base those changes occurred” (Yocelévsky 2002: 44).

In many ways, therefore, it can be seen that one of the main differences of Latin American modernity compared with European modernity is the type of articulation between politics and the economy. Whereas in Europe there seems to be a greater consistency between a socially oriented democracy and an economy quite regulated by the state or the European Union, in Latin America there is a co-existence between centralist and authoritarian features in politics with liberalism in economics. Sometimes this is seen as a contradiction or inconsistency on the part of the Latin American ruling classes. What this criticism overlooks is that neoliberalism in itself, at least in Hayek’s version of it, which seems to be prevalent in Latin America, inherently entails this duality of authoritarian conservatism in cultural and political matters and liberalism in economic matters.

What Hayek proposes is a conservative kind of liberalism which highlights three elements: first, an inherent respect for tradition which fits into an evolutionist conception of culture. Second, a distrust of all attempts at constructing a social order by means of planning which is a consequence of the inherent limitations of reason. Third, a separation of liberalism from democracy. According to Hayek, democratization demands an absolute power of the majority and in that way it could become a sort of anti-liberalism. This opposition between democracy and liberalism is at the heart of neoliberalism and has frequently allowed the ideological justification of dictatorships in Latin America. According to Hayek it is possible to have totalitarian democ-

ratic governments and authoritarian liberal governments and the latter are certainly preferable to the former. Why is it that this kind of thought could become so widespread in Latin America?

My hypothesis is that this is related to the prevalence of Catholicism in Latin America. In contrast to the European and North American paths to modernity, which were influenced by a protestant ethic that values democracy and legality and that, on the other hand, promotes the scientific and rational control of nature, the Latin American path to modernity has been influenced by Catholicism and by authoritarian and centralist forms of government and has had a less marked orientation to the rational control of nature and to technology. The enormous cultural weight of Catholicism in Latin America has been no doubt related to the great success and acceptance of Hayek's brand of neoliberalism in the region.

In spite of the democratizing influence of Enlightenment thought after Latin American independence, which no doubt resulted in a partial moderation of authoritarianism, the latter's cultural strength has not been entirely extinguished in Latin America's socio-political life, as we have just seen. Weber's classical thesis linked Calvinism and protestant Puritanism with the rationalistic spirit of capitalism. Traditional Catholicism appears to have a greater affinity with Hayek's type of neoliberalism. In his conception religion, authoritarianism and a free market system become fused. This could help explain the greater ease with which an overwhelmingly catholic Latin America has adopted a more radical sort of neoliberalism,¹ while in protestant countries a stronger bond survives between protestantism, democracy and rational constructivism.

It is also important to see the connection between a prevalent neoliberal outlook and the new weakness of the industrialization process in Latin America. State-protected and state-promoted industrialization had been the Latin American approach during the first half of the 20th century. The present neoliberal policies of openness to the international market and avoidance of subsidies and state protection have

1 The affinity between Catholicism and Hayekian neoliberalism should not make one forget that the same Catholicism is able to engender quite enlightened forms of opposition to neoliberalism and capitalism as those to be found in Liberation Theology. Yet it is also true to say that they do not prevail within the catholic church and have tended to be repressed by the hierarchy.

meant in practice not only the abandonment of industrialization but also an actual process of deindustrialization in many Latin American countries. Even more, many orthodox economists in the region propound the idea that industrialization is not in itself the only road to development and that by following the theory of comparative advantages some countries can hope to fully develop with almost no industrialization. With the exception of Brazil and Mexico this could be the case of the majority of Latin American countries which basically continue to export primary products.

In effect, free trade and economic policies open to the world market have brought about a considerable diminution of industrial production and employment in Latin America. Some big countries like Mexico and Brazil managed to expand their industrial exports after a while. The rest, on the contrary, followed a more radical model of *laissez-faire* which diversified the export of primary products, but also made more permanent the low level of industrial production and employment. In this, the Latin American path to modernity has been very different from the Asiatic one, where the state took an important role in the acquisition and adaptation of state-of-the-art technologies and in the promotion of industrial exports (Gwynne 1996: 228-229; 220).

4. Results of the Globalized Neoliberal Stage: an Appraisal

In assessing the results of the neoliberal stage and globalization in Latin America, it is clear that in spite of some macro-economic gains like the control of inflation, the influx of foreign capital and fiscal stability, the social impact of radical neoliberal policies plus the results of the economic crisis taking place since 2000, have been on the whole very negative: there has been a steady rise of unemployment and a loss of stability of many jobs. In countries like Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay and Ecuador, the so-called “informal sector” – with its low-wage no-benefits jobs – is greater than the “formal” one, and in the rest of Latin America, with the exception of Chile, the informal sector employs more than the 40% of the workforce (Gwynne 2004: 55). There has also been downward pressures on real wages, reduction in the minimum wage, increased inequalities in the distribution of wealth and a substantial increase in poverty.

Countries like Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, the so-called Andean countries, have today a lower per capita income than in 1990. In the majority of Latin American countries, more than 25% of the population live under the poverty level. In at least seven countries of the region more than half of the population live in that condition, even if poverty has somewhat receded in many of them. On the whole, in Latin America 225 million people (43,9%) have incomes below the poverty level (PNUD 2004: 36).

It is no surprise then that the divergence between the Latin American region and the developed world should continue to grow. In 1978, the per capita income of the six core economies was five times that of the six richer Latin American countries and twelve times that of the six poorer ones. By 2001, the ratio had increased to seven and 29 respectively. But asymmetries have also become internal to Latin America. The gap between the six richer countries and the six poorer ones has almost doubled between 1978 and 2001 (Gwynne 2004: 8-9). Most of the direct foreign investment, virtually 75%, has gone to Mexico, Brazil and some Caribbean offshore financial centres. Brazil and Mexico are practically the only countries in Latin America that have acquired some industrial technological capacity and which can therefore export manufactured products, while the rest of Latin American countries export mainly primary products.

The negative results have brought about strong resistance to the model practically everywhere and as a result serious problems of governance have arisen in the region. In Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Venezuela and Ecuador there has been growing opposition to neoliberal policies. The governance problems are also related to a crisis of the party system. Traditional parties are no longer able to represent the needs and hopes of the voters, and hence they have all but lost support. In the recent municipal elections in Bolivia (5th December 2004) traditional parties like the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), the Movement of the National Revolution (MNR), New Republican Force (NFR) and National Democratic Action (ADN) were almost completely wiped out and the new Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), originating amongst the “cocaleros” (coca cultivators), became the biggest party. In Uruguay, the elections at the end of 2004 brought about the collapse of the traditional parties (Colorado party and Blanco party) which had alternated in ruling the coun-

try for more than 170 years. A coalition of moderate left-wing forces achieved an absolute majority in parliament and also elected the president of the country (Tabaré Vázquez).

There has also been a tendency to endless fragmentation of political parties and lack of loyalty to them. In many countries social movements have become far more important than parties. In the last Colombian election there were around 70 political parties. In Ecuador the practice of winning an election while representing a party, only to change it once elected, is widespread (Arriagada 2004: 4). Over all of Latin America the support of people for parliaments and political parties has fallen below 25% (PNUD 2004: 12). Exceptionally, Chile maintains a solid and representative party structure, but almost 3 million young people refuse to register to be able to vote. Inevitably, all this has affected the functioning of democracy.

Economic issues related to the daily lives of the people have become paramount in Latin America, so much so that for most people their economic well-being has become more important than democracy itself. The politicians and parties' loss of prestige has necessarily affected adhesion to democracy, particularly among the young. The survey conducted by the PNUD shows that a majority of Latin Americans are prepared to drop democracy if it does not solve their economic problems. In fact, 54.7% of all Latin Americans reply that they would be prepared to accept an authoritarian government if it was capable of solving the economic situation (PNUD 2004: 27, 31). Even if since 1989 Latin American countries have not fallen again into dictatorships, the widespread poverty and inequality has made democracy less appealing.

Widespread poverty and disaffection with democracy and politics seem to be the two common elements which affect most Latin American countries in the 2000s. Together they contribute to an increasing problem of governance or, at least, to an increasing gap between people's expectations and the ability of democratic institutions to deliver. This is why the credibility and the very stability of democratic institutions is at risk. And yet, it is difficult to generalize about the likely consequences. For a start, on the economic front there is hardly a new model emerging which could present itself as an alternative to the prevalent neoliberal policies. So the opposition to them is disintegrated and not strong enough to threaten their viability. On the politi-

cal front, in spite of the increasing problems of governance and depoliticization, democracy has survived but also with different levels of risk.

Three different situations seem to be emerging. A first group of countries including Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina and Uruguay since the election of Tabaré Vázquez, have been hit so hard by an economic and political crisis that their political stability has been threatened and both their governments and peoples are increasingly disaffected with globalization and the leadership of the United States. A second group including Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, also in deep crisis, suffer from an important split between the people, which are mostly disaffected and disillusioned, and the governments, which still want to pursue American-led globalization as a way out. Finally there is Chile and Mexico, which in spite of having some problems, have still managed to grow and have fully embraced American-sponsored globalization. Popular resistance to globalization in them is far less marked.

Where can Brazil be placed? Well it is difficult to say. Brazil is clearly more stable politically and follows more orthodox economic policies than the countries in the first group. Brazilian people are not as disaffected with the government as Peruvians or Ecuadoreans in the second group, nor is the government fully neoliberal when the country's industrial interests are at stake. On the other hand it is far less keen on United States-led globalization than Chile and Mexico. Moreover its sheer size and huge population make it qualitatively different. Maybe then, Brazil is in a league of its own, or in a bigger league, as many of its politicians increasingly believe. Notwithstanding that, there is little doubt that it shares many common cultural features and most important problems with the rest of Latin America – even if in a distinct way – and because of that, its future is tied up with the future of Latin America.

The variety of situations in Latin America poses a challenge to the role which the region can play in the world. If, as the title given by me to this paper suggests, the world is entering a post-national phase, then there is little future for Latin America as a balkanized conjunction of nations. The example of the European Union is in this sense crucial to Latin America. And perhaps Brazil's unique position in the region is strategic to playing a leading role in trying to achieve the elusive goal of a Latin American Union.

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